

# ENVIRONMENTAL *Update*



Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality

Spring 2000

## Agency restructures, adding field offices

**T**o serve the public more efficiently, the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality is undergoing a number of structural changes. The most visible change, which will be taking place this spring and summer, is the addition of more field offices across the state.

In addition to the main offices in Lincoln, NDEQ currently has an office of four staff in North Platte, and one person located in Chadron. Over the next few months, offices will be opened in Holdrege, Omaha and Norfolk. Each new office will have three staff persons.

"The purpose of this shift in resources is to make sure that we're out there and accessible to the public," said NDEQ Director Mike Linder. "We need to provide service to all areas of the state, and have people nearby who can make inspections, respond to complaints, and interact with the public. NDEQ needs to be present in the community it serves — Nebraska."

Linder stressed that this will be accomplished by a reallocation of existing staff, and will not result in an increase in NDEQ employees. David Wisch, who had been a unit supervisor in the Integrated Waste Management Section, has been named as supervisor of the field offices. The agency is currently

reviewing applications from agency staff to fill the other positions. Linder said this shift in staffing ties in well with other structural changes occurring within the agency's Lincoln offices.

**T**he NDEQ has long been divided into sections based on specific programs, which in general is a logical means of distributing duties. However, there are often activities

among these programs — such as permitting, compliance inspections, and oversight of cleanup — that are common tasks that should not be segregated by section.

The new structure integrates these common activities into new sections within the Air, Water and Waste Management Divisions, to promote more coordinated permitting, inspections and oversight.

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"If there is magic on this planet, it is contained in water."

-Loren Eiseley-



Photo by Rich Webster

A ground water fortune teller reads the "water future" for three participants of the Children's Groundwater Festival held in Grand Island March 14th. (See article on page 8)

## A Message From The Director



*DEQ Director Mike Linder*

Welcome to the first edition of Environmental Update published by the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality. This publication will appear three times during the year in an effort to educate and inform the reader about current environmental issues in Nebraska.

The publication is written, edited and published by NDEQ staff and will feature articles which are current and significant. I am very excited to share this information with you and to showcase the expertise that the NDEQ has on staff. These dedicated public servants — many native Nebraskans — strive every day to move toward our common goal of environmental stewardship. This publication is our way of sharing with you what we are doing and what we see as important issues.

As we celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of Earth Day this year, we must not be complacent. We all must feel an urgency to move to the next step of environmental stewardship.

The remaining challenges in environmental protection are complex and affect a diverse, wide-ranging population. The last thirty years have brought tremendous improvements in our environmental quality. However, those improvements have, arguably, been the “easy” steps. We now face a next generation of challenge that involves diffuse sources of pollution. Many of our challenges are multi-state or national in nature which create another level of complexity. I invite you to use this publication as part of your effort to become informed about environmental issues. It is critical that the general public, those that are regulated, and all of the interest groups work with the NDEQ. It is through these partnership efforts that we can find success. Use this publication, our website, or any other means to provide input. Work with us. Inform us of your thoughts. Together we can reach our goals.

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## Debut of Revised Agency Newsletter

After a long hiatus, this issue of the Environmental Update marks a renewed effort by the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality to produce an agency newsletter on a regular basis. The Update will be produced three times a year — in the spring, summer and fall.

The purpose of this newsletter is to provide the interested public with an overview of environmental issues that the agency is involved in. A large number of staff have contributed to this publication.

If you have questions or comments regarding this newsletter, please contact the Update's editorial staff in the Public Information Office. You can contact Brian McManus, Richard Webster, and Francina Stithem at NDEQ's Lincoln offices:

phone:

(402) 471-2186;

address:

P.O. Box 98922, Lincoln,  
NE 68509-8922;

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pubinfo@mail.deq.state.ne.us

# Agency switches to digital cameras

*Eliminates film, darkroom wastes*

The Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality recently purchased several digital cameras as a means of preventing pollution and improving agency efficiency.

NDEQ staff take a large number of pictures when they are on inspections or documenting grant activities. When Ben Hammerschmidt, NDEQ's Pollution Prevention Coordinator, reviewed these practices, he came to the conclusion that the use of digital cameras would dramatically reduce wastes generated from film and photo processing, as well as save the agency staff time and money. Altogether, NDEQ staff take approximately 16,000 photos in a year's time. Switching to digital cameras will eliminate over 400 pounds of hazardous material and wastewater from being generated per year. In addition, there is a significant cost saving. When considering all costs, including film

and photo development, conventional photography costs approximately 62 cents per photo. Digital photography reduces the cost to 10 cents per photograph.

Hammerschmidt presented a proposal to the EPA, and received approval to invest pollution prevention grant funds toward the purchase of several digital cameras for the agency.

"I consider this to be an investment which will pay for itself in a very short time," Hammerschmidt said. "Considering the fact that every time we use these cameras, we've avoided the purchase of film or the need for development, this process makes economic sense — as well as reducing waste." Hammerschmidt estimates the savings will pay for the initial investment within 15 months.

The cameras record images on conventional 3.5" computer floppy disks. These disks can be loaded directly into NDEQ computers, and the images can be downloaded into a variety of software applications. The images can then be stored electronically, or reprinted on agency printers, and the floppy disks can be erased and re-used to take more photos.

Staff who have tried the camera have had enthusiastic responses. Among the benefits they cited were:

- Simple to use — After brief

training, staff were able to take the cameras into the field and take good quality photos.

- Immediate feedback — As staff take photos in the field, they can review their work on-site, and delete and re-shoot those that didn't turn out well.
- Eliminates processing time — Because staff can load photos directly into computer-generated documents, there's no waiting for film to come back from the processors. The time it takes to make reprints is also dramatically reduced.
- "You don't waste a whole roll of film when you only need to take two pictures at a site," an NDEQ inspector said.
- Improves filing organization — Photos can be filed electronically and can be easily located and retrieved for future reference.
- Cheap storage capacity — Approximately 20 photos can be recorded and stored on one floppy disk. These disks cost about 50 cents each, and can be reused.
- "Web site friendly" — Photos from these cameras can be easily incorporated into NDEQ's web site.

In addition, NDEQ staff involved in production of publications say that the digital photos simplify the layout and design processes. In fact, this issue of the Environmental Update is the agency's first publication to use digital photos exclusively, and the agency intends to continue this trend in future publications.

## Litter, Recycling Grants Awarded

Mike Linder, NDEQ Director, announced the awarding of \$1,042,500 in grants to 47 recipients through the Litter Reduction and Recycling Grant Program. The program provides grants to Nebraska projects in three areas: public education, cleanup, and recycling.



Photo by Rich Webster



## Joyce Circle Septic System Demonstration

It is a multi-million dollar problem: nitrate contamination of Nebraska's drinking water. More than \$24 million has been spent by public water systems over the past two decades coping with the problems caused by this contamination. Sources of the nitrates in ground water include fertilizers, livestock waste, waste lagoon sludge, nitrogen-bearing minerals in the soil — and septic systems. With approximately 250,000 septic tank systems operating in the state, the potential for nitrate contamination is obvious and widespread.

To help combat this ever-growing problem, the Department of Environmental Quality's **Nebraska Environmental Partnerships** program (formerly called the Nebraska Mandates Management

Initiative) provided a \$40,000 grant to the University of Nebraska - Water Center to demonstrate the effectiveness of a new method of wastewater treatment for septic systems. Joyce Circle, a 15-home area near Mead, was chosen as the site for the demonstration.

Septic tank systems include the buried septic tank and a subsurface soil absorption system (lateral field). In a typical septic system, nitrates produced by waste in the system usually cannot be transformed efficiently to nitrogen gases. This leaves nitrates in the septic tank system, allowing them to seep out through the lateral field into the surrounding soil, and often to underlying ground water. As a result, septic systems are a major source of ground water nitrate contamination in the United States.

Dr. Tian Zhang, with the UNL Department of Civil Engineering,

completed a study to determine the feasibility of using a *sulfur/limestone autotrophic denitrification system* for on-site treatment of nitrates from septic tank systems. The feasibility study showed that the system can work effectively. For the Mead demonstration, Zhang incorporated a sulfur/limestone-filled tank into a septic system designed for Joyce Circle. The system consists of two anaerobic tanks, one aerobic tank, the sulfur/limestone tank, and the lateral field.

Construction of the septic system was completed in December 1999. Monitoring ports are incorporated into the system to allow testing of the waste at several locations during the treatment process. Dr. Zhang will supervise the testing, which will occur every two weeks for two years.

"We are always looking for alternatives for nitrate removal," said Steve Goans, Technical Assistance Unit Supervisor. "Even in a relatively small housing project, such as Joyce Circle, significant amounts of nitrates are discharged from the septic system. Dr. Zhang's process attempts to remove those nitrates from the waste stream. We are hopeful that it may be a cost-effective alternative."

Article by MJ Rose,  
Environmental Assistance Division

Photos by MJ Rose



## Interns Provide Pollution Prevention Assistance

This summer, engineering student interns will provide pollution prevention assistance to Nebraska small businesses, and industries. The Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and EPA Region VII have formed a unique partnership to provide this service to interested business and industry. If you know of a business that would like to participate, please contact Ben Hammerschmidt at (402) 471-6988.

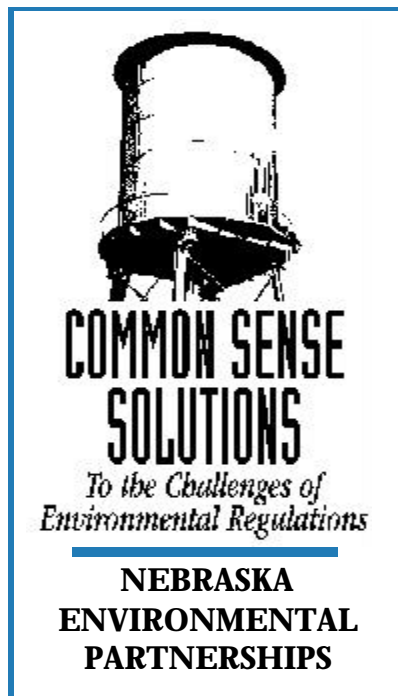
# Nebraska Environmental Partnerships

*A new name,  
new directions*

The Department of Environmental Quality's *Nebraska Mandates Management Initiative*, launched in 1994, was originally designed to help small Nebraska communities cope with an increasing number of unfunded federal mandates related to environmental regulations. The program's focus remains on environmental issues, but increased attention is now being placed on developing and strengthening partnerships to better assist small communities as they respond to an ever-increasing number of environmental health-related regulations and infrastructure needs. As the program expands in new directions, it will now bear a new name: **Nebraska Environmental Partnerships**.

The program's accomplishments are often achieved through community assessments. Grants

are given to small communities to hire a consultant to perform a snapshot analysis of the community's current environmental infrastructure for public drinking water and wastewater. The analysis assesses health risks and possible areas of regulatory non-compliance. The consultant identifies all relevant data concerning the community's environmental health status, and identifies any current or potential



problems. If problems are identified, the consultant provides a cost estimate to eliminate them, and prioritizes activities if several needs are identified.

The next step in the process is a meeting involving the consultant, a DEQ program team, and the village/city board to discuss the assessment, answer questions, and finalize priorities. Partnerships form between the community, state government, engineers, and other agencies such as natural resources districts, resource conservation & development areas, the Nebraska Rural Water Association, the Midwest Assistance Program, and the University of Nebraska.

"The program has been beneficial to numerous Nebraska communities, and we hope to build on those successes as we take it to a new level," said program administrator M.J. Rose. "The public health and environmental challenges facing many small and rural communities can seem overwhelming, so we want to let these communities know that there is help available, and strength in resolving these problems as partners."

*Nebraska Environmental Partnerships has provided assistance to over 200 communities.*

New efforts of the Nebraska Environmental Partnerships program include:

- developing a training course for state employees to increase understanding of the unique social, economic, legal, and environmental challenges facing small communities;
- hiring a contractor to complete a study assessing the environmental regulatory effects on businesses in small communities;
- planning an Alternative Technologies for Small Communities Conference to highlight alternative technologies for drinking water and wastewater that are successful in other states;

- partnering with natural resources districts to cover the cost of the closure of abandoned wells within communities and their wellhead protection areas; and
- assisting communities with a wellhead protection program to protect the quality of their drinking water and their investment in their well field.

*For additional information on the Nebraska Environmental Partnership program, contact Joe Francis or M.J. Rose in NDEQ's Environmental Assistance Division at (402) 471-6974.*

## Grant for Proper Closure of Abandoned Wells

The Nebraska Environmental Trust Fund has awarded \$40,000 to the Nebraska Natural Resources Commission and the NDEQ's Nebraska Environmental Partnerships program for the proper closure of abandoned wells. This award is for a two year period.

## Walnut Creek Lake Project

The Walnut Creek Lake and Recreation Area, near Papillion, represents a new approach to reservoir development. Walnut Creek Lake planners, aware that Omaha area lakes suffer from excess sediment and nutrients, set out to prevent those problems from the start. The project partners consisted of the Papio-Missouri River NRD, the City of Papillion, Sarpy County, University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Game and Parks Commission, and the Department of Environmental Quality.

An initial accomplishment was the creation of a 15-member Clean Lakes Community Council consisting of area farmers, residents and other private citizens. The Council's mission was to develop management goals for the lake watershed that would serve the needs and desires of the community and protect the lake from run-off pollution. The Council quickly established itself as the driving force of the project.

The Walnut Creek watershed was entirely agricultural and enjoyed an unusually high level of land treatment at the beginning of the project. However, the Council and project partners recognized that creation of a lake would quickly attract residential and commercial development in the watershed and with it, the excessive erosion characteristic of land development. To guard against this threat, the Council drafted a special ordinance for the lake watershed that requires a high level of erosion control on construction sites and provides for higher penalties than usual for violators of the ordinance. The City of Papillion subsequently adopted the ordinance within its

jurisdiction of the lake watershed. The practices required by the ordinance provide the first barrier to keep sediment on the development site and out of the lake.

Further protections were built into the design of the lake itself. Islands and jetties dissipate wave action and prevent shoreline erosion. Sediment retention basins intercept sediment before it reaches the lake. Shoreline plantings stabilize soils, break up wave action and provide food and habitat for aquatic organisms. Pallet stacks, tire reefs, and brush piles placed in the bottom of the lake provide shelter for fish. Boating restrictions prevent generation of destructive wakes that erode



Clean Lakes Community Council members visit the lake.

shorelines and disturb aquatic wildlife. The cost of installing these practices as preventive measures is a fraction of the costs of installing them as restorative measures, after a lake has suffered degradation.

The goal of the project partners and the Citizens Council was to create a model lake designed to

resist the pollutant pressures typical in eastern Nebraska, and to meet or exceed its design lifetime. Early water quality data suggest that goal will be achieved. Initial water transparency of 61 inches is expected to stabilize in the long term to about 28 inches, well above the 22 inches average for other area lakes. In-lake total phosphorus concentrations should stabilize at 0.07 milligrams per liter (mg/l) from the current 0.05 mg/l. Other area lakes average 0.08 mg/l total phosphorous. Sediment basins and other erosion controls will limit lake volume loss to 0.27% per year compared to the average 0.85% loss in other area lakes.

High water quality and habitat enhancements are expected to make Walnut Creek Lake the premier fishery among the Omaha area lakes. An added bonus of the project is that it leaves behind an energized group of watershed residents. The Clean Lakes Community Council is dedicated to assuring that protective measures remain in place to protect the lake from run-off pollution.

Article by Elbert Traylor,  
Water Quality Division

*The DEQ's Nonpoint Source Pollution Management Program (Section 319 of the Clean Water Act) provided funding for outreach and installation of best management practices in the Walnut Creek watershed to reduce sediment and nutrient run-off into the lake. The Walnut Creek Lake and Recreation Area Project will be a model for future lake projects funded by the program.*



Walnut Creek Lake located near Papillion

Photo by Francina Sithern



## DEQ Staff Discuss Programs with Consultants

The Department of Environmental Quality held a Consultants Day on Feb. 8 in Lincoln. The purpose of this event is to provide consultants with an overview of agency programs, and to respond to questions they may have.

"This event has proven to be an effective way for the agency to discuss a variety of issues with consultants who work on environmental issues on a daily basis," said Dan Eddinger, who heads the DEQ Small Business Assistance program. "This is a great opportunity for us to all get together and make sure we're on the same track."

Among the topics discussed were: livestock issues; ground water data management; surface water regulations; hazardous waste issues; pollution prevention; a new priority system for Leaking Underground Storage Tank sites; agency requests for contractual services; air program issues; storm water and other water discharge issues; the State Revolving Fund loan programs; and a cooperative interstate program to develop innovative technology.

These workshops are conducted once every two years as a means of updating consultants on DEQ programs. In addition, program-specific workshops are also held on a regular basis to advise consultants about specific areas of interest, including the Leaking Underground Storage Tank program and the livestock waste management program.

*Article and photos by Brian McManus*



Pictured top to bottom: Dan Eddinger discusses the agency structure and business assistance; Steve Kemp discusses ground water data management; livestock information is provided by Renee Hancock. Approximately 75 people attended the day's events.

## Nebraska Safety Council

On April 26 & 27 the Nebraska Safety Council will be hosting a conference designed to bring professionals in the safety, health and environmental fields together to discuss common issues.

"The NDEQ has participated in the planning of the conference and we are excited at the prospect of bringing together professionals that often deal with same topics in different fashions," said Joe Francis, NDEQ Environmental Assistance Division Director. "The conference will provide an opportunity for those involved in similar issues to establish a dialogue that will hopefully result in a more comprehensive understanding of issues."

The keynote for the first day will consist of a joint presentation by Jay Benforado, Deputy Associate

Administrator of EPA's Office of Policy/Reinvention, and R. Davis Layne, Deputy Assistant Secretary of OSHA. Mr. Benforado has played a leading role in EPA's reinvention efforts beginning with the initial reinvention effort in 1995. Mr. Benforado will address the current reinvention agenda and pay particular attention to the role of Environmental Management Systems in the regulatory environment.

The NDEQ will be active in presenting topics related to the RCRA and Community Right-to-Know programs. Additionally, NDEQ personnel will be staffing a regulatory "chat room" where conference attendees will be able to pose questions to NDEQ staff in an informal manner. The "chat room" was proposed at the suggestion of Director Mike Linder and will include representatives of the Nebraska Dept. of Labor and OSHA.

## Livestock Regulations

A two-year effort to amend livestock waste disposal regulations was finalized in February when Gov. Mike Johanns signed into law revisions to Title 130, Rules and Regulations Pertaining to Livestock Waste Control.

The revisions took effect February 28. The regulations give Nebraska's livestock operations additional measures with which to comply. For example, new operations must meet revised construction, location and management requirements for livestock waste control facilities.

Title 130 was last amended in 1995. Major changes to the regulations became necessary with the passage of the Livestock Waste Management Act in 1998 and subsequent amendments to the Act in 1999.

Among the major changes mandated by the Livestock Waste Management Act and implemented by the revised Title 130 are:

- Fees for inspections, and construction and operating permits;
- A classification system for livestock operations, based on animal units;
- A requirement for all livestock operations to request an inspection by NDEQ by January 1, 2000, unless the operation previously had been permitted or exempted, or had less than 300 animal units, or was a calving operation that confined livestock less than 90 days a year;
- Provisions for determining a "Bad Actor" - a livestock producer/manager/owner who has previously violated environmental laws;
- Tighter construction requirements on larger livestock waste lagoons to reduce seepage;
- Public notices on applications from livestock operations with more than 1,000 animal units;

- A requirement for a licensed Professional Engineer to complete permit applications; and
- Restrictions on livestock waste control facilities in Cold Water Class A watersheds.

The two-year process of bringing the revised Title 130 into law involved extensive input from the livestock industry and the public. The process included public meetings across the state, testimony before the Environmental Quality Council, and hundreds of letters from citizens, industry representatives and livestock producers.

The provisions of the Livestock Waste Management Act and the new Title 130 regulations were extensively publicized and discussed in

newspapers, radio, television, trade and farm magazines. Information also was disseminated to the University of Nebraska Extension Offices, and natural resources districts.

*Article by Pat Dinslage,  
Agriculture Section*

## Livestock News Briefs

NDEQ's Agriculture Section received 1,130 requests for initial inspections in 1999, with nearly 900 of the requests arriving in December.

In 1999, NDEQ issued 69 construction permits and 79 new operating permits for livestock waste control facilities.

## Groundwater Festival



Photos by Rich Webster

"Groundwater: A Grand Oasis" was the theme of the 12th annual Children's Groundwater Festival held March 14 in Grand Island. Approximately 2000 4th, 5th, and 6th grade students filled the classrooms and hallways of Central Community College and College Park in a day of fun, hands-on water related education. Numerous NDEQ staff participated, sharing their expertise in such areas as water quality monitoring, groundwater geology, and nonpoint source pollution prevention.

**(left)** Dave Schumacher, Dane Shuman, and Heath Wilkinson discuss water quality monitoring with festival participants in an event called "Swamp Things."

**(top)** A student deciding just how edible her "Edible Earth Parfait" is. This activity taught students about the geologic make-up of an aquifer.

**(bottom)** Todd Davis filling in for Alex Trebek as host for a game of "Water Jeopardy."



## NDEQ Implements "RBCA"

### *A New Approach To Tank Leak Risk Assessment*

After several years of development, the Leaking Underground Storage Tank (LUST) program is now using risk-based corrective action (RBCA) at petroleum release sites throughout the state. RBCA (pronounced "Rebecca") is a multi-tiered approach to assessing potential impact or risk to human health and safety using basic risk assessment principles. It then focuses available resources on the highest priority petroleum releases.

The Department of Environmental Quality began drafting RBCA guidance in 1995, and its use was mandated by the State Legislature in 1996. Current (and future) RBCA guidelines are cooperatively developed between the department and a Technical Advisory Committee appointed to assist the department in creating program guidance.

To date, NDEQ has received over 5500 reports of confirmed releases of petroleum products, mostly gasoline, from underground storage tanks. About 2400 of the sites are considered "closed," with no further investigation or cleanup planned. The majority of the remaining 3000+ sites have been backlogged, awaiting further action.

"The RBCA process will provide the department and tank leak site owners with a better understanding of the extent of contamination and environmental hazards and risk at each site," said David Chambers, LUST program supervisor. "It is a more efficient, streamlined way of prioritizing risk than our previous method. Our goal has always been to make common sense decisions based on a scientific look at each site. This process allows us to achieve that goal more efficiently."

NDEQ has instituted the first tier of the process, referred to as RBCA Tier 1. The initial phase of the RBCA

Tier 1 process consists of a site investigation to determine maximum contamination levels at the site, and other area characteristics. Currently, 40-50 LUST site investigations are being initiated per month, with emphasis placed on sites for which little or no data has been collected. The Tier 1 investigation serves several purposes:

- to define known or assumed "source areas" from a leaking underground storage tank;
- to collect soil and ground water samples for selected chemicals of concern based on the petroleum product(s) released in these source areas;
- to locate potential points of exposure; and
- to determine land use in the area around a release site.

The information collected through the Tier 1 investigation is used to evaluate the potential risk of contamination coming into contact with humans. Human exposure can occur through drinking contami-

nated ground water; inhalation of vapors in an enclosed space, such as a basement; or absorption, ingestion, or inhalation of particulates and vapors from contaminated surface soil. Contaminant levels found at the site are then measured against screening levels set by the department: if contaminant levels are less than screening levels, the site is considered to be no risk; if contaminant levels are greater than screening levels, the RBCA process at that site would continue on to RBCA Tier 2.

Tier 2 guidance is under development, but will be designed to collect significantly more detailed site-specific information, and establish site specific cleanup levels. While several states have incorporated a third tier of risk assessment into their RBCA processes, NDEQ currently has no plans to develop a Tier 3 process.

*Article by Jim Borovich,  
LUST/RA Section*

## Source Water Assessment Program

The Source Water Assessment Program (SWAP) was developed by the NDEQ to protect the sources of the state's public drinking water systems from contamination. The program, designed to protect ground water and surface water sources, resulted from amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act of 1996.

NDEQ staff determine and map the source of drinking water for public water supply systems. These maps are called wellhead protection area maps. When a community is ready to proceed with the assessment program, local citizens conduct inventories of potential sources of contamination in drinking water source areas. Using this information,

the vulnerability of public water supply systems to contamination is determined. NDEQ compiles this information and gives it to the public water supplier, who is responsible for providing the information to the public. The community can then prioritize and plan local activities that will protect the source of their drinking water.

The NDEQ has completed 320 wellhead protection area maps. An assessment must be completed for each public water system by May 2003, so emphasis is now placed on completing wellhead protection area maps for all of the state's 1400 public drinking water systems.

NDEQ encourages Nebraskans to become involved in source water protection efforts. One way to do this is to check with municipal officials to determine if a wellhead protection area map has been completed for your area. *For more information, contact Stephanie Vap at (402) 471-0096 or visit our website at [www.deq.state.ne.us](http://www.deq.state.ne.us)*

## Did You Know?

The Waste Management Division has recently updated and published a new Directory of Hazardous Waste Management Facilities. It's now in a convenient 8½" x 5½" booklet that includes a good selection of vendors that provide an array of hazardous waste and associated recycling services. Some example headings are: Analytical Laboratories; Treatment, Storage, and Disposal Facilities; Hazardous Waste Transporters; Lab Packing Services; Recyclers for Lighting and Batteries; Hazardous Waste Consultants; and more. The directory is not all inclusive, but does cover many of the providers in the surrounding states or providers that may be unique to a service. For more information or to obtain a copy of the directory, contact Jim Harford at (402) 471-8308.

## Compliance Assistance Visits

The Waste Management Section provides several types of hazardous waste compliance assistance. One type is the compliance assistance visit. You may ask what a compliance assistance visit is, or "what's in it for me?"

Simply put, this program helps the citizens of Nebraska comply with hazardous waste regulations. Jim Harford of NDEQ's Waste Management Division provides all forms of hazardous waste compliance assistance. He can visit your facility or business to see if you have any current compliance problems, advise you on how to fix them, and advise you on possible ways to reduce your waste streams. Pollution prevention suggestions are included as an important component of any site visit.

Now the obvious question: "Why would I want a regulator poking

around my business?" Good question. When you request a compliance assistance visit, it is performed by an individual who is not a hazardous waste inspector and whose role is assistance. Unless a substantial and imminent endangerment to the environment or the public is observed, Jim does not take enforcement action on hazardous waste violations that may be present.

Following the inspection, he provides a detailed report to the facility that specifies how to fix regulatory problems. The report also makes suggestions on how to reduce hazardous waste and other solid wastes. This can save you money and time and even increase productivity and safety.

*If you believe you can benefit from this free NDEQ regulatory assistance program, give Jim Harford a call at (402) 471-8308 to get more details and get your own compliance assistance visit scheduled.*

## In The Field

Dave Johnson of NDEQ's Waste Management Division discusses operations of the Plainview Transfer Station with facility manager Marlin Babutzke.

Johnson was part of an NDEQ team conducting a comprehensive inspection

of the facility. Waste Management Division personnel conduct regular inspections of the state's landfills and other disposal areas, transfer stations, compost facilities, and materials recovery facilities.



Photo by Todd Davis

## Illegal Dumping Complaints Increase

The Department of Environmental Quality has seen a steady increase statewide in the number of complaints related to the illegal dumping of construction and demolition (C&D) waste over the last three years. More than 1/3 of the 160 illegal dumping complaints received in 1999 involved C&D waste. Most illegal dumping is the result of a building being demolished or roofing material that is hauled out of a village or city and dumped in rural areas. **This is illegal.**

Improper disposal of C&D waste can result in surface water or ground water contamination. Illegal dump sites also are attractive to other illegal dumpers, making the problem even worse. If you suspect that illegal dumping is happening in your community, call the NDEQ toll free at (877) 253-2603.

A document titled *Guidelines for Disposal of Construction and Demolition Waste* is available on the NDEQ website or can be obtained by contacting the NDEQ Waste Management Division at the toll free number.

## Open Burning

Nebraska has regulated open burning for over 20 years. In general, open burning is prohibited statewide. (Open burning is the burning of items without using an enclosed burning area such as an incinerator or fireplace.) However, there are exceptions to the prohibition which require that permits be issued prior to the burning. The Department of Environmental Quality enforces the state regulations pertaining to open burning. There are several types of fires that may be set without prior approval from the NDEQ. These fires often still require a permit from the local fire chief, and must not cause a public nuisance or hazard. These include:

- fires set solely for recreational purposes or for outdoor cooking of food for human consumption;
- fires set for training fire fighting personnel;
- fires set in the operation of

smokeless flare stacks for the combustion of waste gas;

- fires set in an agricultural operation for the destruction of trees or vegetation collected from the operation's property, or for agriculturally related materials that are potentially hazardous and where disposal by burning is recommended by the manufacturer;
- fires set to destroy household refuse on residential premises containing ten or less dwelling units, by individuals living on the premises; and
- fires set for plant or wildlife management, provided such burning is conducted by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, the US Forest Service, or the University of Nebraska.

For any other type of fire, the person or community usually needs to obtain two burn permits, one from the local fire chief and one from NDEQ. The burn permit issued by the fire chief, for fire safety purposes, states that the holder of the permit

may need to contact NDEQ prior to burning. This is so the NDEQ can determine if a second permit is needed.

The individual or community desiring to burn will be sent a burn permit application. The application is short, and collects information on the type of material that is to be burned, and where and when the burn will take place. NDEQ assesses the possible environmental impacts of the fire, particularly to air quality.

Usually it takes less than two weeks for an application to be processed, at which time a burn permit will be either issued or denied. There is no charge for the permits, **which are issued only for the burning of trees, brush, and untreated lumber.** NDEQ may need to inspect the burn site prior to a permit being issued.

For information about open burning or obtaining an open burning permit, please contact Angela Duncan at (402)471-2189.

*Article by Angela Duncan  
Air Quality Division*

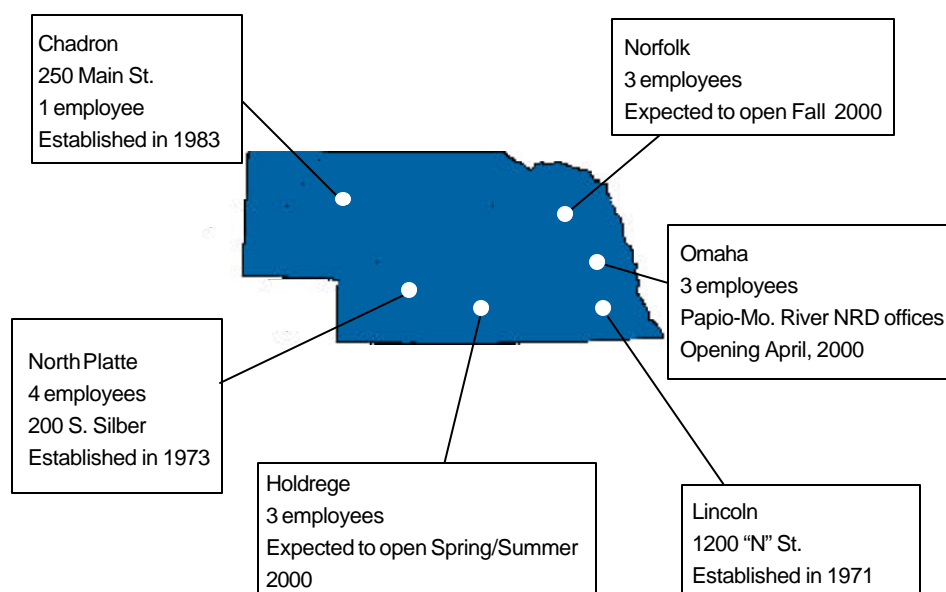
### *field offices, cont. from page 1*

"It's more efficient to have DEQ inspectors make one site visit and address as many relevant issues as possible than to have programs send staff out to the same site on different days," Linder said. "We're shifting our resources so that we make a more coordinated effort for those types of activities."

Linder said that most of the staff will continue to carry out the same duties as they had prior to the restructuring. The purpose of the changes was to develop a more consistent approach and to promote greater efficiency.

*Article by Brian McManus*

## NDEQ Field Offices



*Upcoming issues of the Environmental Update will feature each of the new field offices and staff working there.*



# Environmental Quality Council

## *June EQC Meeting to be Multi-Site Teleconference*

The upcoming quarterly Environmental Quality Council (EQC) meeting, to be held June 1, will be conducted as a teleconference and will be linked to a number of locations in Nebraska. The 16-member EQC enacts and amends environmental rules and regulations for the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality, and conducts public hearings prior to making those decisions.

The teleconference format was chosen because the council's agenda is shorter than normal, and the format allows council members and the interested public across Nebraska to participate without having to travel to Lincoln.

At the June meeting, the EQC will conduct hearings related to Surface Water Quality Standards, Waste Reduction and Recycling Grant regulations, and the Intended Use Plans for the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund and the Clean Water State Revolving Fund.

Although the locations for the teleconference had not been finalized as of publication time, in May this information will be listed on DEQ's web site: **[www.deq.state.ne.us](http://www.deq.state.ne.us)**, or contact NDEQ at (402) 471-2186 for further information.



Photo by Rich Webster

The multicolored York water tower is fast becoming a well known landmark along Interstate 80's long stretch across Nebraska. The York tower and other water towers throughout the state serve a vital role in delivering drinking water to Nebraskans. The DEQ's *Source Water Protection* program works with communities to protect the sources of this drinking water. (see article page 9)